

A Prayer for Spiritual Strength

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[0 : 00] I'll turn back for a short time to the chapter we had, Ephesians chapter 3. Spending a short time in verses 14 to the end, Ephesians chapter 3, verses 14 to the end.

We're having in mind this evening just a simple question. How do we receive spiritual strength? How do we receive spiritual strength?

This week, this past, the start of this week, Monday, Tuesday, Tuesday evening. Myself and some other friends, all of us are ministers across Scotland, Baptists and Free Church and everything else in between.

We'll chat occasionally and we have a catch up occasionally, there were 10 of us. And we're just sharing that, not as ministers, but just as brothers, as Christians, if we're honest, how much we lack spiritual strength.

At times it's much easier for us to do this stuff. We can serve, we can, not that it's a bad thing, but we can do all the practical realities of serving.

[1 : 13] We can help prepare things, help serve things, help do all the stuff of the gospel cause. But at the same time, spiritually, to be so lacking in strength.

I was thinking through that and I was wondering, well, what does Scripture say to us? What answer does Scripture give us of how then do we find spiritual strength? If we're all being honest, again, not just ministers, but brothers and sisters, every one of us.

Again, as I said last Lord's Day, there's no difference in the throne of grace between a minister and a member, a minister and a Christian, I should say.

Every single Christian, myself included, we all are the same before God. We also all have the same lacking at times, the same needs at times.

So what does Scripture say? Well, in this section, verses 14 to the end, I'm seeing at least five directions for us.

[2 : 18] Five hints, five helps for us to show us how we find or how we regain, how we revive spiritual strength. We praise and we give thanks to God for his goodness to us this past summer, this past few months.

We've been praying and we've been seeing the Lord answering prayer in various ways. And it's very important for us, not that we are, but very important for us not to rest. Not physically. Physically, we must rest.

But spiritually and mentally not to rest and be happy with what is happening now. Yes, we see some growth. We praise God for that. And we're not looking for numbers.

In one sense, we're not in the numbers business, are we? We're not a business. We're not worried about overheads. God provides. God keeps us. We want to see people come to hear about Jesus.

And that is numbers. That is numbers. But not numbers for numbers sake. It's numbers because we want the more and more people, our family members, our neighbours, everyone in North Tolstall to come and hear and know about Jesus.

[3 : 25] We know that's our business here. That's our job here as a church. We're here to worship the Lord and praise the Lord. And that we're here then to share the love we have for the Lord and to encourage and to compel those around us to come and to look at him and to see him for themselves.

All that is good. But at times it can leave us absolutely spiritually exhausted. So what are these five helps, five hints for us how we regain spiritual strength?

Let's go through the section. First of all then, verse 14 itself. For this reason I bow my knees before the Father.

What's the reason? Well, the reason is the context of verses 11, 12, 13. Before that, Paul is suffering. He's writing to Ephesians. And it's clear the Ephesians are concerned for Paul's physical suffering and with that his mental and spiritual suffering.

We know Paul, of course, is imprisoned here yet again. As he writes to Ephesians, and we can read in verse 13. So I ask you not to lose heart for what I am suffering for you, which is for, or which is, literally, which is for your glory.

[4 : 45] For this reason, for this reason, I bow my knees before the Father. Although physically, Paul is in a grim situation, we've mentioned before of Paul's imprisonment time and time again.

This time he is again in prison, and this time we are, no doubt, that his prison experience was grim. Miserable. Locked in a cage. Effectively, a cave behind a cage, as you say, somewhere dark and dingy.

On the ground somewhere, chained. And yet, Paul is saying. Paul is reminding the Ephesians about himself and they. It is not the physical worries he is talking about, or the physical realities he is talking about.

But spiritually, we all need help. We all need strength. And it begins. The very best place, the first place we have to begin, when we feel ourselves spiritually running a bit tired or running a bit empty.

For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father. Paul and we with him must begin from a place of humility. A place of humility.

[5 : 58] Paul the Apostle and we here in North Tulsa. I am sure there are many differences, but actually in many ways we are the same. Yes, he was an apostle and we are not apostles. But as a brother in the Lord, who was seeking the good of Christ amongst the people he was with.

We are with him 100%, are we not? Paul and all he did was seeking the good, the Christian good. Seeking the gospel good from the place he was ministering to. That is our desire in North Tulsa.

And Paul begins on his knees. For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father. Brothers and sisters, I know we are a praying congregation.

Again, I feel it. Both Emma and I feel it. And I shared this before. I'm always mindful of what you share with my pulpit. But I've said it to you before. I have no shame in saying it.

Spiritually, in terms of spiritual warfare. I've shared this with other ministers too. This year has been an interesting year. A difficult year in many ways.

[7 : 02] And we are so reliant on your prayers and being with us through that. Brothers and sisters, it is a warfare we are waging.

It is a constant war. Every one of us is waging as believers. We see that even mentioned here in verse 10. That the Lord God who created all things so that through the church, the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities.

Where? In heavenly places. Our warfare. Our fight. It is not against our neighbours. Not against the unbelieving friends and family.

It is against the evil one who is in their lives. Who they are enslaved to. Who they are chained to. It is the demons and their armies that are arrayed against every single one of us.

Whether you perceive it or not. Whether you feel it or not. That's besides the point. God and his goodness allows different situations and different people to experience it differently. That's up to the Lord, not to us.

[8 : 08] But the truth is true. We are all facing a constant spiritual warfare. That leaves us tired. As we covered here a few months ago in our spiritual warfare series very briefly.

As we remind ourselves as to the armour of God. It is his armour we put on. It is not armour we ourselves find or not armour we ourselves craft. We come first and foremost for strength to him.

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father. The Lord loves North Tulsa far more than you or I.

That's a fact. And the Lord is eternally more able to save any and everyone in North Tulsa more than you or I. Another fact.

We begin looking to him for all our hope and all our strength. As we humble ourselves and we say to the Lord again and again.

[9 : 06] I can't do this. As a minister I often think and say. I can't do this. As Christians do we not often say to the Lord.

This is so hard. This unbelieving family member and friend and whatever it is situation. I can't do it. And we're not wrong.

We can't do it can we? Not one of us can do it. That's why we join with Paul. We begin on our knees before our God. The first place to revive our spiritual strength is by humbling ourselves and lowering ourselves and reminding ourselves that we are jars of clay with a gospel treasure inside.

Yes but we're jars of clay. We are weak. We're human. We faint and we fail. We are frail beings and we know that. He is not.

And he is our strength. So we begin in prayer. And from that we have a reminder verse 15 on to verse 16. Yes we are frail beings.

[10 : 14] But what is within us? Or indeed who is within us? Verse 16. But according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his spirit in your inner being.

Again the Lord cares for North Tulsa more than we do. And when we seek to engage in gospel work in North Tulsa as a congregation or privately in your own lives in the village.

Yes it is nerve wracking to say to someone. Do you want to come to church? Have you ever wondered about coming to church? As we hope to have a course. A Hope Explored course soon.

And it's very nerve wracking I know to hand an invite to someone and say well running this course. It's for any questions you have about who Jesus is or what it all means.

You can come to me to Haley and so and so date. Just an hour. It's nerve wracking to do that simple thing. Your invite does not save anyone. My preaching, my work here does not save anyone.

[11 : 23] The Lord works through us. And he will save his people. He works through us how? Because his spirit, brothers and sisters, has made his home in us.

It's not just the spirit working through us. Look at the wording. The power through his spirit we are. In your inner being. The Holy Spirit is in us.

Brothers and sisters, he lives in us. The power that again worked and hovered over creation. The power that raised Christ from the dead.

The power that is the sustaining reality of God. The power that makes every single atom and galaxy hold together.

The power that is the power of life itself is in us. And he is in us. And he is working through us. Even more than that though.

[12 : 24] It's not just the Holy Spirit himself who works in us. We're reminded that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. Of course as the Holy Spirit dwells.

We see our saviour also we know dwells. God dwells in us. Brothers and sisters, we've touched before on the glorious truth of our union with Jesus.

Just to remind ourselves even from this verse. He is in us through the spirit. And we are in him. And that is where we are right now.

As we engage in gospel work. As we find ourselves exhausted and worn down spiritually. Let's be reminded that we're in him. We're in him.

We're not fighting this battle by ourselves. We're not trying our best and seeing what happens. No. We are in him. He covers us. We are forgiven.

[13 : 24] We are loved. We are kept. We are enrobed in his perfection and his righteousness. The garment of his beauty is over us. And that is where we serve.

That's the position we work from. His full armour, his full power covers us. Because we're in him. And because we're in him.

He, the spirit, is in us. He is in us. That results in what?

As being rooted and grounded in love. That is our foundation, isn't it? Who do we love this evening? We love our Lord.

We love the one who made us. Who knows us. Who saved us. Who rescued us. We love him. And because we love him. Because we love our triune God.

[14 : 24] We love one another, don't we? As brothers and sisters. If we don't, then we're in trouble. Scripture makes clear. We love one another. At least we're to love one another.

As family. And then, because we love one another as a church family. We then have a growing desire. To reach out and show the love. To who? To the lost.

Family members, friends. Everyone in North Ulster. From end to end. From the Glen to Gary. Every single home and person here deserves. Not just our time.

Not just our love. Not in an airy kind of out of our way. But in a coherent, clear way. All that we are is rooted and grounded in love. At times, love speaks truth into a situation that is difficult.

At a time, love means having hard conversations with people. Who are self-righteous and who think their goodness will save themselves. And you have to say, well, no. Your religiousness won't save you.

[15 : 26] Your good works cannot save you. And it feels like it's not love, but it's love. At times, love will make us say, you must turn to Jesus and turn away from yourself.

That feels like everything else, apart from love to the person you're saying it to. But it's love. Love at times compels us to say, there is only one way of salvation.

Only one way to God. Through the Lord Jesus Christ. But love for our saviour. Love for one another. And love for the wider community.

That must be what compels us. Again, not numbers. Not our fame. Not our glory. Not even duty. It has to be love.

Rooted and grounded. Note that in love. The two descriptors there. It's the same word, really. But in stronger terms. Rooted, first of all. And grounded has the same root word.

[16 : 21] The same starting word. But it's even stronger. So rooted and really rooted. To make it bad grammar, bad English. Rooted and really rooted in love.

So if we find ourselves being rooted in love. If we remind ourselves of the love our saviour has for us. And the love we have for him. The love we have for one another. The love we're called to have for North Tulsa. What then does that lead to?

Strength. Strength. Rooted and grounded in love. You may have the strength to comprehend. With all the saints.

With all the saints. Brothers and sisters, we're in this together. We're in this together. As we ask the Lord for an increase in spiritual strength.

We're together saying, Lord, we are weak. Not just in this week. Not just in this congregation week. As brothers and sisters. One family together. At times we are so, so weak.

[17 : 22] We are so, so tired. In terms of our spiritual lives. But together with all the saints. We care to just now have the saints in North Tulsa.

But this includes all the saints. Across all of God's people. Across the whole world. And indeed across all of time and space. But let's just stay on North Tulsa tonight. Brothers and sisters, we're in this together.

We're in this together. However, again, I'm constantly recording. But it's a good thing to say. I have no shame in saying it. I am very thankful. And they won't appreciate this.

That's fine. I'm very thankful for a good Kirk session. Fellow brothers and sisters. Brothers and sisters. Fellow brothers, sorry. Fellow brothers who are in it together. Yes, we have different ideas.

Different plans at times. Different ways of getting things done. But as a session, I want you to be assured. That every single issue and discussion we've had. It is so clear.

[18 : 21] Every single individual brother. Our concern is the same thing. For God's glory to be seen and known in North Tulsa. Brothers and sisters. Together as a congregation.

Brothers and sisters. That is our hope, isn't it? That is our desire. Together we have one single vision. Different ideas. How do you get there? That's fine. That is good. But one single vision.

As one body of saints. And what are we to comprehend as one body of saints? What are we to remind ourselves about? What's the beauty of verse 18?

As one church family. As brothers and sisters. We are to work together. To comprehend. The breadth. And the length. And the height.

And the depth. Of. Of. Of. Quite literally. Of the love. Of Christ. To know the love of Christ. In all. Its dimensions.

[19 : 19] We are to comprehend. The totally. Uncomprehendable. Love. Of. Our. Savior. Savior. How are we strengthened spiritually?

We are to pray. We are to place ourselves. Humbly before the Lord. We are to remind ourselves. The Holy Spirit lives in us. And he works in us.

We are to remind ourselves. That we are kept by our Savior. We are to remind ourselves. That we are in it together. Not one of us is on our own. And all.

This comes from a place. Of knowing. And of seeking to know more. The love. Of our Savior. For us. We are seeking as a church.

Every time we engage in God's word. We are seeking to know more. Of the breadth. And length. And height. And depth. Of the love. Of Jesus.

[20 : 20] As we seek to know it. It's a love. What? That surpasses. Knowledge. It's a glorious beauty of the gospel. Some might call that a contradiction. It is not.

It is just beautiful. It is just beautiful. That there is no limit. We can never know. We can never think too much. Or appreciate too much.

Or spend too much time. Thinking about the love. Of our Savior. Why? Because the love. Of our Savior. It. Is. Knowledge.

That is. That is. Unachievable. It surpasses. Knowledge. Surpasses. Knowledge. As we.

Ponder together. And individually. As a church family. The more and more. Of who our Savior is. More and more. Of the promise of God. Throughout the Old Testament. Pointing towards a Savior.

[21 : 13] As we spend more time. In God's word. The Lord. Will bless. His word. To us. The Lord. Will bless his word. And that will then. Transfer. Into the Lord. Bringing people in.

Brothers and sisters. We're seeing that take place. Let's then. Trust the Lord. The process. We have dedicated ourselves. Failingly at times. Poorly at times.

As a minister. I feel it. And I know it. But. There's plenty of sermons. And plenty of applications. I wish I had done differently. But it's not about us. Is it? It's not about us. As brothers and sisters together.

We pray for North Tulsa. We delve into God's word. We preach God's word. We receive God's word. And God. Will bring in. And build his church.

All we have to have. Is simple faith in him. Doing his work here. And so far. We are seeing that. Slowly.

[22 : 11] But surely. Seeds. Planted. Many years ago. In diverse ways. Are now. At least showing. Early signs.

Of growth. Now. How they continue to grow. And what the future is. Let's not get ahead of ourselves. We are here right now. What the Lord is doing right now.

We praise him for that. So let's together. Be strengthened. As we ponder. The love. Of our saviour. As we seek.

To see. Everyone. North Tulsa. Come to know him. As their. Saviour too. This is a God. We are. Thinking about. This is a God. We're praying to. In verse 20.

It is a God. It is a God. Who is able. To do. Far more abundantly. Than all we ask or think. According to the power at work.

[23 : 07] Within us. I wonder. I wonder. I spoke about this. Earlier in the year. I wonder. How spiritually optimistic.

You are. Are we. Increasing. In our spiritual. Optimism. Are we. Trusting God. More and more.

To do. What he says. He will do. How is our faith. What God promises to do. We have a God. Who will do. Who is able to do. Far more abundantly.

And all that we ask. Or think. Many of us. Are praying for two. Or three. To come. Perhaps to church. And back to church Sunday. God was able to do far more.

Than our one. Or two. We've prayed for one or two. To respond to various things. We've done. God has responded. And given us far more. Than one or two. And right now.

[24 : 04] As you keep praying. As we all keep praying. For one and two. As we keep seeking. To see one and two more. We trust. That God. Is able. To bring in.

Far more than one. Or two. All for his glory. All in his time. Again.

Someone. Quarters. Quarters before. But someone. Approached Spurgeon. A young minister. He had trained through Spurgeon. And learned through Spurgeon.

And he had gone on to start his own ministry. And his ministry was completely failing. And on paper. This young man. And he was doing everything he could do. He was preaching fine. Good enough sermons.

He was an affable enough person. He was mixing well. And everything else. Everything was fine on paper. He had good elders with him. Good brothers with him. He had a healthy enough congregation. But he'd been laboring for a few years.

[25 : 01] And there was only decline. Only decline. Only decline. And so Spurgeon. He goes to Spurgeon. And he says. He lays out the thing. I've done everything I can do. I'm preaching this.

I'm doing that. Everything is. What he taught us to do. And Spurgeon. Devastates the young man. By asking him. All that's well.

And all that's fine. But do you actually believe. That God will save these people. A reminder for us is.

And a question for us is. I should say. Do we actually believe. God will save these people. Do we take God. At his word. That he is the one.

Who is able to do. Far more abundantly. Than all that we ask. Or think. Ultimately. It's what. All for his glory.

[25 : 56] To him. Be glory in the church. And in Christ Jesus. Throughout all generations. Forever. And ever. Amen. Brothers and sisters.

There are days. And weeks. And months. And seasons. Where we are spiritually weak. Spiritually sapped. Let's come to him. And remind ourselves. First and foremost. And remind one another.

As brothers and sisters. It's all his work. But he has called us. To have a vital part. In that work. Yes. He is doing it. In his power. But in his power.

He has chosen. To use means. And that means. Is us. He uses the church. To accomplish his plans. And brothers and sisters. We are the church. Therefore.

We have been called. By our great. And glorious God. In his wisdom. To use the foolish things. Of the world. Which is us at times. Myself at times.

[26 : 52] For his glory. For his glory. Do we truly believe. We find ourselves. Feeling spiritually weak. Do we truly believe.

That the Lord cares. More for North Tolstall. Than we do. Do we truly believe. The Lord is able. To bring in. And save. Every single lost soul. In this village.

If we don't. Follow Paul. Start in prayer. Ponder of the goodness. And glory of Jesus. Ponder it together. As a church family. And look to him.

And trust. That he is able. To do far more. Than we think. Understand. Or imagine. Some words of encouragement. From his word.

For us. Don't look in. A word of prayer. Pastor Trevor. Thank you. Our sovereign. Father in heaven.

[27 : 46] We do give thanks. And to the. The right truth. Which we have read. And have heard. Expounded. And you know. Hearing this. And we do take up.

The sentiments. Of the. Prayer. That we have been. Reflecting upon. And as we. Traverse this. Wilderness journey.

We do see the need. For Christ. To dwell. In our hearts. By faith. And we pray. Oh heavenly father.

That. We would strive. And seek. To have that. Spirit. With strength. That comes. From. Christ. Dwelling. In our hearts.

Not somebody. That comes. Into our hearts. Now and. Again. Not somebody. That is there. One week. And not the next. But as we have read.

[28 : 45] A Christ. Who dwells. As a permanent. Place. In the outworking. Of our lives. And works. Sin. As that.

Sin. As that. For which. He commended. Maybe. Saying that she has chosen. The one thing. Needful. And further on.

As Paul goes on. To write to the church. In Colossae. He reminded them. That if they were risen with Christ. They were to set their affection.

Not their affections. But their affection. On the things that are above. Where Christ is. And we live in a day.

When many things contend for that affection. And many things contend for the heart. And the psalmist himself had to pray.

[29 : 41] Teach me thy ways. And in thy truth. O Lord. Then walk with I. Unite my heart. That I thy name. May fear continually.

And it is only ourselves. Who know whether. Tonight we are before thee. With a united heart. Or with a divided heart.

Whether we know what it is in our lives. To have Christ dwelling in the heart. And if Christ is dwelling in the heart. Then what is inward.

Will be seen outwardly. In how we live our lives. And although the Ephesians. Of whom we have been reading tonight. Were praised by Paul.

When he said of them. That they had been raised up together. And made to sit together. In heavenly places. In Christ Jesus. Yet he saw.

[30 : 40] That there was need for them to be strengthened. By Christ dwelling in their hearts. And so we pray. That as we leave here tonight. It would be with a question.

Whether we do have. That permanent indwelling. Of Christ. We are reminded of.

His message to the church. At Laodicea. Put out of their hearts. When he said to them. Behold. I stand at the door.

And knock. Oh Lord. Dear God. Deliver us from. Putting thee out of our lives. From deceiving yourselves.

And deceiving others. And may we go on to know. Not only Christ. But what Paul prayed for. That we might be filled.

[31 : 37] With the fullness of God. And live unto him. Bless our time together. Hear. Every word of prayer.

That has gone up. From this meeting tonight. And from other such meetings. Across our island. We pray for our nation. Oh Father.

We dread. What. Lies ahead. As we see. And we know. That a government. Is going to be appointed tomorrow. Whether it will be.

The current government. Or a new government. Ruled over. By another political party. We do tremble. As we see.

The complete. And utter absence. Of a spirit of humility. A spirit of grace. A spirit.

- [32 : 33] Where. Our government. Would stand up. On the first day. And say. That without thee. They can do nothing. But on the morrow. We will hear much.
- Of what they can do. Without thee. And our nation. Tonight. Is a sorry. And a sad witness. To that. And we pray. That the burden.
- For our nation. Would come upon us. For if we do not. Pray for it. Who is going to pray for it. Is the multitudes. Tonight.
- Who have no desire. For thee. For thy word. For thy day. For thy Christ. For prayer. They will never. Be the means. But it is us.
- Thy people. Who have been placed here. To serve thee. In this day. In this generation. O Lord. Our God. Burden us.
- [33 : 29] For the nation. For us. We have right. Thou art the one. Who is able. To do abundantly. Above what we can ask.
- Or even think. We pray. That they would hear us. And help us. Come over. Out every provocation. And love us. Threely.
- In the Christ. Of whom we have been. Reflecting upon. And the praise. Shall be thine. Forever in the. Amen. So I've got time. To close. Singing from. Psalm 82.
- Scottish Psalter. Psalm 82. A psalm. Where the Lord. In power. Mocks.
- Those who. Set themselves up. As so-called. God's. But he is reminding us. That he alone. Is God. And he alone. As verse 8 says. He alone. Will take all the nations.
- [34 : 22] For his inheritance. In God's assembly. God does stand. He judge of gods among. How long. Accepting persons. Vile. Will ye judgments. Will ye give judgments wrong.
- Defend the poor. And fatherless. To poor. Oppressed. Do right. The poor. And needy. One set free. Rid them. From ill men's might. Psalm 82. Have a whole psalm.
- To God's praise. Lord. God's tosi.
- Higher passes. God's amine. How long accepting persons thine, how long accepting persons thine, will he get judgment wrong.
- He felt the poor and fatherless to pure or pressed to write.
- [35 : 46] The poor and need there was set free the poor and need once set free with them from old man's might.
- They know who know not will understand in darkness they walk on.
- All the foundations of the foundations of the earth all the foundations of the earth and all the foundations of the earth and all the course had come.
- the earth and all the and all the ones that come. I said that ye are gone, now, now, sons of the highest all, the highest all, that ye shall die like men and us, that ye shall die like men and us, and us, one of the princes fall.
- O God, to the grace of thyself, the earth to judgment come, the earth to judgment come, all, for that that thine inheritance for that that thine inheritance shall take the nations home.
- [38 : 23] the nations of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you now and forevermore. Amen.